

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - March 22, 2007

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Aurora Torres Lopez was sentenced today in U.S. District Court in San Diego by the Honorable John A. Houston to serve 41 months in custody, followed by three years of supervised release, based on her guilty pleas on September 25, 2006, to Conspiracy to Bring in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain, Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain, and Bribery of a Public Official.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Tokarz, who prosecuted the case, Torres was a leader of a smuggling organization that bribed Michael Anthony Gilliland ("Gilliland"), a former Customs and Border Protection officer at the Otay Mesa Port of Entry, to smuggle illegal aliens into the United States through Gilliland's inspection lane. During the investigation, agents with the Border Corruption Task Force intercepted telephone calls, pursuant to a lawful court order, in which Gilliland discussed specific alien smuggling plans with co-defendants Torres and Marina Perez De Garcia. Agents also surveilled Gilliland admitting vehicles containing illegal aliens into the United States. Agents executed search warrants following the arrests of the conspirators on June 6, 2006, and found approximately \$457,900 in U.S. currency at Torres'

house. Gilliland was sentenced on February 15, 2007, to serve 60 months in custody and pay a \$200,000 fine. Others involved in the smuggling scheme have been sentenced as noted below.

In her plea agreement, Torres admitted to bringing over 100 illegal aliens into the United States for financial gain and to paying Gilliland between \$70,000 and \$120,000 in United States currency. Torres also agreed not to contest the administrative forfeiture of the \$457,900 found at her residence as proceeds of the offenses.

In imposing the sentence, Judge Houston noted that the amount of cash found at Torres' residence showed that she was a trusted member of the conspiracy.

United States Attorney Hewitt commended the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Office of Professional Responsibility, United States Border Patrol, Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General, Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, and the San Diego, Chula Vista, and Long Beach Police Departments for their work in investigating this case. U.S. Attorney Hewitt said, "Smuggling human beings is reprehensible conduct which fully warrants the substantial prison sentences and fines imposed in this case."

DEFENDANTS

Criminal Case No. 06CR1336-JAH

Michael Anthony Gilliland

Sentence: 60 months; \$200,000 fine; 3 years supervised release; \$5,700 forfeited.

Aurora Torres Lopez

Sentence: 41 months; 3 years supervised release

Marina Perez de Garcia

Sentence: 41 months; 3 years supervised release; \$57,328 forfeited.

Patricia Santamaria

Sentence: 36 months; 3 years supervised release; property forfeited.

Salvador Zuniga-Torres

Sentence: 18 months; 2 years supervised release.

Rosalba Raygoza-Romero

Sentence: 21 months; 2 years supervised release.

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Count: 1

Charges: Conspiracy to Bring in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain
Title 18, United States Code, Section 371.
Maximum Penalty: 5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine per count.

Counts: 14

Charges: Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain
Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii).
Maximum Penalty: 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine per count.

Count: 38

Charges: Bribery of a Public Official
Title 18, United States Code, Section 201(b)(2)(A) and (c) and (b)(1)(A) and (c).
Maximum Penalty: 15 years in prison and a fine not to exceed three times the monetary amount of the bribe.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Office of Professional Responsibility
United States Border Patrol
Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General
Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation
San Diego Police Department
Chula Vista Police Department
Long Beach Police Department